DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 274 769 UD 025 216

AUTHOR Slaughter, Diana T.; Schneider, Barbara L.
TITLE Newcomers: Blacks in Private Schools. Executive Summary.
INSTITUTION Northwestern Univ., Evanston, Ill. School of Education.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 86
GRANT NIE-G-82-0040
NOTE 57p.; For full report, see UD 025 215.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Black Education; *Black Students; Black Youth; Elementary Schools; Minority Group Children; Parent Attitudes; *Parent School Relationship; Parent Student Relationship; *Private Schools; *School Choice; *Urban Schools
IDENTIFIERS Illinois (Chicago)

ABSTRACT

The increased enrollment and recruitment of black pupils in urban nonpublic schools prompted this study, which uses an ethnographic approach to investigate the family/school relations of black children and their parents. This executive summary is extrapolated from the first intensive study of black children in ecologically diverse settings. The schools, all located in Chicago, Illinois, include two private elite, one independent alternative, and one Roman Catholic. Two primary research questions are addressed: (1) why do black parents send their children to urban private elementary schools, and (2) what are the experiences of the children in these schools? This summary has three purposes: (1) to present the principal findings of the study; (2) to interpret these findings given the overall conceptual framework, guiding hypotheses, and assumptions of the study; and (3) to draw educational policy implications. (LHW)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ED274769

# Newcomers: Blacks in Private Schools

Executive Summary

Diana T. Slaughter and Barbara L. Schneider

School of Education

Northwestern University

2003 Sheridan Road

Evanston, IL 60201

Final Report to the National Institute of Education, Grant No. NIE-G-82-0040, Project No. 2-0450.

© February, 1986

The contents of this two-volume report were developed under a grant from the National Institute of Education (currently Office of Research), a part of the United States Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of that agency, nor its endorsement. Additional funding support for report reproduction was provided by Northwestern University.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Diana Slaughter

Northwestern Univ

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Executive Summary: Newcomers - Blacks in Private Schools

Introduction

This research is the first intensive study of black school-aged children in ecologically diverse school settings. It is one of only a few detailed studies of any aspect of private schooling. Two schools are private elite (Oak Lawn, Roman); one is an independent alternative school (Monroe); and one is Roman Catholic (St August). All are located in Chicago, Illinois. Furthermore, the research is one of only a handful of studies that systematically and simultaneously examine children, their parents and the schools they attend, whether private or public. Both quantitative and qualitative data are use in this ethnographic study to portray the meaning and significance of schooling to these children and their parents. Finally, the study also joins those precious few investigations which portray black children in adaptive, successful school roles.

One purpose of this concluding chapter is to briefly summarize the principal findings of the study. A second purpose is to interpret these findings given the overall conceptual framework, guiding hypotheses, and assumptions of the study. A third, and final, purpose is to draw educational policy implications. Three interdependent audiences are envisioned as particularly policy-relevant: (1) the heterogeneous private school community, (2) black families with school-aged children, and (3) scholars, researchers, and practitioners especially concerned with the interrelationships

between educational environments and children's learning and development.

Summary of Findings

Detailed findings of this study are presented in chapters 7-12. Two research questions guided the study: first, why are increasing numbers of black parents enrolling their children in private schools, and second, what are the experiences of the children in these schools? The first question arose from an analysis of recent unprecedented educational trends in black American urban communities. The second question addressed previously unexplored relationships between the children, their parents, and the school cultures in which the families had chosen to participate. Before interpreting the findings, a brief synopsis is presented in view of these questions.

Why do black parents send their children to private schools?

The study assumed that parents have intuitive educational goals that could be inductively derived from their responses to appropriately directed interview questions. It also assumed that because these black parents were charting new educational directions within the black community in sending their children to desegregated urban, private schools, they would be particularly aware of their educational aims for their children. Therefore, the question was primarily conceived as a need for analysis of the aims of education as perceived by both black and nonblack parents.

Six different parental patterns were identified, each one of which represents a distinctly different view that the black parents hold about the aims of education for their children. The differing patterns are related to the particular private school attended, but within each school there is also diversity of perspectives.

The patterns are based upon parental responses to the family goals section of the parent interview. Open-ended interviews with 74 middle class black parents and 57 middle class nonblack parents, most of whom have children in grades 5-8, focused upon the parents' own school experiences (mother and father), their aspirations for their child, their analysis of education today, and their concrete descriptions of how they chose their child's school. Nonblack parents were deliberately chosen non-randomly; they are the parents of children identified by teachers as friendly to the black children. If the two parents groups were initially as similar as possible, differences obtained between them would enrich and amplify an understanding of the educational goals of black parents. The majority of nonblack parents in this sample are white. However, about 10% are Asian or Hispanic.

Goals differ by school and race, but not by child grade level. Each of the six inductively-derived response patterns are reflective of parents' educational aims. Four criteria distinguish the response patterns: (1) whether the parents perceived the home or the school as having primary authority

for the child's education; (2) the degree of emphasis on the centrality of the child's feelings in the educational process; (3) the degree of emphasis on the social or reputational standing of the school; and (4) the amount of emphasis on linkages between present curriculum and future child learning and development outcomes. The six goal types are: (1) Authoritative, (2) Deliberate, (3) Humanistic, (4) Moral, (5) Practical, and (6) Traditional.

Briefly, the most salient characteristics of these patterns are as follows:

1. Authoritative: There are six key elements of this response pattern, the first of which is that these parents reached the decision to send their child to a school after a very systematic investigation of alternative options, primarily because they see themselves as being very responsible for the quality of education their child receives inside and outside of school.
2. Deliberate: There are five key elements in this response pattern, the first of which is that these parents believe good teachers are absolutely essential for children to learn. Because the parents firmly believe that children cannot learn without good teachers, the hallmark of an excellent school is excellent teaching. In short, parents are not educators, teachers are.
3. Humanistic: There are six key elements of this response pattern, the first of which is that these parents want their children to learn in an environment that is

pleasant, joyful, and relatively non-competitive. They judge the goodness of a school according to whether children are both academically productive and happy within it, and they feel very competent at making such judgments. Authority for the child's education lies with the family.

4. Moral: There are two key elements of this response pattern. First, these parents firmly believe that a quality education addresses the spiritual side of a child's development, equally as well as the basics and/or enriched curriculum. Therefore, a key focus of the child's education is the development of its moral and social character; and second, the parents prefer a disciplined, ordered learning environment in which children learn to behave in accordance with respected adults' standards and expectations.

5. Practical: There are five key elements of this response pattern, the first and second of which are that first, these parents expect teachers to be nurturing, and thus demonstrate concern for the academic and social-emotional needs of the child; and second, these parents are especially sensitive to any signs of rejection or indifference on the part of school faculty or staff toward themselves or their children; such behavior is intolerable. However, authority for the child's education lies with the school.

6. Traditional: There are five key elements of this response pattern, the first of which is that these parents believe firmly in the importance of a high quality college preparatory learning environment, beginning as early as elementary school, if not before. Secondly, the parents believe that the best education is in private schooling because such schools provide the necessary exposure to an enriched curriculum. Family members often had a prior history of private school attendance, and the options considered for the child were usually limited to the pool of available private schools.

The distribution of the response patterns was: (1) Authoritative - 19; (2) Deliberate - 33; (3) Humanistic - 34; (4) Moral - 10; (5) Practical - 13; and (6) Traditional - 22. There are significant differences between four schools in the predominant parental response pattern. However, all but one response pattern (Practical) appear in more than one school. Black parents are significantly more often classified as either Deliberate or Authoritative than nonblack parents. Nonblacks parents are more often classified as either Humanistic or Traditional. At Oak Lawn, the first and second modal response patterns of parents are Deliberate and Humanistic; at Roman they are first, Traditional, and second Deliberate or Humanistic; at St August they are Practical and Moral; and at Monroe they are Humanistic and Authoritative.

Although there were differences among the response patterns, most parents shared common views on certain

educational issues. For example, nearly all parents have high educational aspirations for their children; they value preschool education; they want schools to provide a strong background in the fundamentals of reading, writing, and mathematical computation; and they are not opposed to the idea of public education. Both groups of parents were generally satisfied with the quality of education they received. However, they stress that today the available quality of public education in their neighborhoods and communities is inferior.

Although both parent groups are equally likely to indicate that the value of a desegregated education is the opportunity for children to learn interracial tolerance, more black parents also emphasize the importance such an educational context has for the child's opportunity to learn about other cultures. Therefore, more black than nonblack parents were likely to link educational quality with social diversity in schools. Interestingly, significantly more black than nonblack parents had attended public elementary schools and had other-race teachers.

These findings clearly demonstrate that parents, including black parents, have educational aims that can be differentiated. Often intuitive, these educational ideologies guide parental selection of specific private schools, and provide a basis for parental appraisal of the educational experiences of their children.

What are the schooling experiences of the black children?

Children were observed in schools for a total of 135 observational half-days over the 83-84 academic year. Observations were conducted not only in classrooms, lunchrooms, gym, swimming, field trips, assemblies, but also at school events, parent meetings, and on graduation day. Informal conversations were held with children whenever possible. Reading and mathematics achievements scores, as well as self concept data, were obtained for fifth to eighth graders. Prior to conducting these observations, an attempt was made to learn the parent and faculty perceptions of each school's history, educational goals, and means of achieving those goals. This information, as well as available archival and other public documents assisted in characterizing the cultural-ecological context of each institution. Across the four schools the four top administrators, 26 teachers, and nine (designated by administrators) parent leaders were interviewed.

The findings regarding the children's lives in the schools suggest these black children are currently receiving some of the best academic education available in the nation. Evidence to support this assertion follows, first with respect to school life, then with respect to children's self concepts and academic achievements.

1. First, administrators and teachers hold high academic standards for all students and assumes major

responsibility for ensuring that students meet these expectations;

2. Second, the teachers are dedicated to their subject-matter and are respected by administrators and pupils;
3. Third, children have homework which is graded and monitored; emphasis is on the acquisition of skills and the development of critical thinking skills;
4. Fourth, full, descriptive accounts of the child's academic progress are routinely reported to each family;
5. Fifth, special classes and one-on-one tutoring sessions are available to children who need additional academic help;
6. Six, in three of the four schools computer instruction is an integral part of the school curriculum;
7. Seven, all schools emphasize the humanities (arts, music, drama) as a vital and necessary component of the school curriculum;
8. Eight, there are many opportunities for unique academically-related field trips; children participate in fund-raising to support these activities;
9. Nine, physical facilities for gym, recreation, and assemblies are available;
10. Ten, each school gives explicit attention to parental involvement in school life.
11. Eleven, there are few discipline problems; time in the classroom is devoted to teaching the subject matter and

the low (usually 1/17) teacher-pupil ratio gives all children ample opportunity to participate;

Fifth to eighth grade children were administered the Harter self concept measures of Perceived Competence. The instrument provides for assessment of cognitive and social competence, general self worth and evaluated physical appearance, as well as perceived athletic competence and evaluated behavioral conduct. The children's perceived competencies in all areas are comparable to national norms. However, significant school differences were obtained in students' perceptions of athletic competence, differences favoring the two private elite schools in the study, and significant racial differences, favoring black students, were obtained on perceived social competence and physical appearance.

Fifth to eighth grade children's achievements on standard tests are, expectably, at grade level or above. Reading comprehension is slightly below grade level at one of the three schools (Catholic), but mathematics computation is at grade level or above at all schools. However, there are significant school differences in both reading comprehension and mathematics computation, differences favoring the private elite schools. Further, significant racial differences in reading comprehension, favoring nonblacks, were also obtained.

All schools successfully meet minimal criteria for educational effectiveness; within these contexts, the

participating black children do also. However, other findings with respect to black children's social and identity development, as black persons, are less conclusive. For example, in three of the four schools the curriculum gives little to no attention to black and/or poor people in this nation. The Catholic school is the one exception. Interviews with teachers in the other schools, especially some black and sensitive "liberal" teachers, reveal a concern that these children cannot identify with black persons who are not as privileged as themselves. Generally, the three schools deemphasize, as a matter of administrative policy, attention to racial and cultural differences.

The pattern of the children's peer relations in informal settings range from those black children who self-consciously have only nonblack friends, to those black children who appear to regularly choose to sit together, and exclude nonblack contacts. Few black children, when asked to describe how someone would look and act if they were to disappear and this person were to take their place, mentioned any racial features (e.g. skin color, hair texture). Even fewer described themselves directly as a black person.

These results demonstrate that black children are having a successful academic experience in the four private schools. The four schools were chosen initially because they had a reputation for academic excellence, but this reputation need not have extended to the black students. Other researchers have documented the differential academic and social

expectations sometimes held for black youth in desegregated schools (e.g., Rist, 1978; Schofield, 1982). However, in the majority of these exceptionally fine schools, some of the special needs of black students, as black persons, were being ignored.

Importantly, each school accomplished its educational mission in accordance with its own unique heritage and identity. Interviews with administrators, faculty, and parent leaders at one private elite school (Oak Lawn) stressed a traditional college preparatory curriculum, and a high emphasis on social character and adjustment. Using the classification schema developed for parents in this study, the school is both Traditional and Moral. In contrast, the other private elite school (Roman) is both Traditional and Humanistic in orientation. The Catholic school (St August) shows elements of both Humanistic and Moral response patterns; and the Alternative-Independent school (Monroe) is essentially Humanistic in its highly student-centered approach to learning and development. There are apparently several socialization paths to educational excellence (four were identified in this study), and black children and their families appear flexible and adaptive enough to utilize each of them.

Analysis and Interpretation

Bronfenbrenner (1979) has argued that an ecological perspective on human development involves simultaneous consideration of the exo-, macro-, meso-, and microsystemic

levels of analysis. Importantly, when analyzing and interpreting childhood behavior and development, many researchers currently focus solely upon a microsystemic level of analysis. This single focus approach often results in little attention to how research participants define their immediate situations, or to how these emergent definitions refract upon a broader sociocultural context. Further, it implies that generalizations about how persons behave tend not to arise from study of their experiences in settings which are natural and familiar to them. Such generalizations, therefore, frequently have limited relevance for social policies and programs.

In this study, a naturally-occurring social phenomenon was identified and investigated from the perspectives of involved participants. During the study, several levels of analysis were found important to understanding the meaning and significance of private schooling to black children and their parents.

Exosystemic issues: School desegregation

First, at the exosystemic level, each school had developed deliberate admissions policies and practices in regard to black students. At the 110-year-old Oak Lawn school, for example, the current headmaster self-consciously initiated an active desegregation effort. He reports initial concern that Oak Lawn was being characterized as less progressive in its desegregation efforts in comparison with other neighboring private elite schools. At St August,

changes in neighborhood populations resulted in a shift in the racial and ethnic group backgrounds of potential pupils, a shift neglected in previous years but now embraced by the present directors of the school. In contrast, Roman's initial desegregation efforts in the sixties may have been influenced by the "zeitgeist" of the times, given that it has traditionally made efforts to remain "avant garde." Today, however, the school is uncomfortable with its relatively low (percentage-wise) minority enrollment. The headmaster believes all of Roman's children could benefit from the stability offered by the children of many middle and upper-middle income black families. Finally, Monroe was founded as an alternative preschool. Its financial solvency was intimately tied to the receipt of funds from Project Head Start through the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). Unlike the other schools, black children have been a part of Monroe since its founding in the sixties. The inclusion of black pupils was always explicitly desired by the school's parent leaders and administrators, who wished to create an educational environment representative of all social classes and races.

In each instance, black students' participation in these desegregated urban private schools is a product of social forces extrinsic to the schools themselves. These forces were refracted and incorporated into administrative policy according to each school's uniquely perceived identity and mission.

families have chosen for them. Nonblack children at Oak Lawn, and black children at Oak Lawn, Roman, and Monroe, in particular, are likely to have the experience of having "friends at home" and "friends at school," the latter of whom may be of a different race than the former. Further, both black and nonblack parents appear to value this aspect of their children's daily lives. Black and nonblack parents felt that the experience of a desegregated education enabled the children to learn tolerance for persons different from themselves. In addition, black parents frequently stressed that children were learning to cope with a different culture.

Black parents look to the children's schooling experiences to provide significant inputs into their social development that homes and neighborhoods do not, or frequently cannot, provide. The parents appear to have anticipated that what this generation of children will need for sustained social mobility and economic opportunity are both an excellent basic education and the chance to learn as much about coping within a dominant American culture as early as possible in their development. Many parents do not themselves presently live a socially integrated life style, but they do expect and hope that their children could, if they so chose. At the least, the children will be prepared to successfully compete at a good college, and in broader society. However, not all black parents are so futuristically oriented; many simply want their child to participate positively with others in a

It is very important that, in being desegregated, these four schools are "mavericks" within the private school community, both in Chicago, and nationwide. Indeed, it has been argued (Schneider & Slaughter, 1984) that many black parents might well have preferred to seek desegregated private schooling prior to the past 10-15 years, but that educational policies and practices in these schools precluded this option. What could at first appear to be a new trend for black Americans may, in fact, be better characterized as a new social opportunity.

Macrosocietal issues: Social and academic equity between races.

During the study it was also learned that certain macrosocietal concepts and issues are very important to how participants define the social realities of the schools. Careful analyses of the patterns of social mobility and perceptions of desegregation/integration of black and nonblack parents, for example, reveal several important points about social equity within the schools (Slaughter, Johnson, & Schneider, 1985).

Social equity between black and nonblack families and children.

Both parent groups tend to live in racially homogeneous neighborhoods, though the schools themselves are located in desegregated census tracts. Black children, more often than other children however, are more likely to enter racially desegregated neighborhoods to attend the schools their

desegregated school setting. In both instances, quality education is perceived as the necessary foundation for social and economic equity in the future.

However, the black parents are pragmatic in their emphasis on school socialization for socially and economically equitable adult roles. Most parents appear not to expect the schools to extend their focus to the black community as a whole, a community still largely poor and socially disenfrancised. Neither parents nor school faculty expect the schools to be a significant and important source for learning about persons less privileged generally, or the black community in particular. Both black parents and faculty hold the family accountable for this information. Further, only two of the four schools (Oak Lawn, St August) report explicit daily practices designed to foster interracial tolerance. Oak Lawn, for example, has assigned lunchroom seating, partly to insure that children of differing backgrounds share informal time together during each school day. In contrast, St August incorporates an ideology of "one human family" into its philosophical underpinnings. Therefore, this perspective is pervasive throughout school life as experienced by the children.

Both Monroe and Roman appear to rely on the spontaneous tendencies of the children to form interracial friendships. At Monroe, where 50% of the small student population is black, and a high percentage of black families live in the school's community area, this strategy is more successful. However, at

Roman, where only 6% of the much larger student population is black, and the majority of the black students live outside the school's community area, this strategy is not successful. There are more obvious indications of self-imposed segregation during informal student activities at Roman school. These tendencies, at any of the schools, should not be surprising because, in fact, they reflect how the parents live. Children are especially innovative when they, at these ages, can completely create and generate new role behaviors which are not characteristic of the adults who care for them, whether parents or teachers (Nonetheless, many instances of precisely such behavior were observed in the schools. Other data obtained from parents, but not discussed in this report, indicate that indeed there is evidence of bidirectional socialization (i.e., child to parent, parent to child) about cross-race, cross-class relationships)).

Additonal peer status data support the on-site observations. Although black students in the four schools are equally as likely to be chosen as their nonblack peers as someone others "like to study with," "be with," or perceive they "can be influenced by," the black children achieve this form of social equity in the schools through the support of same-race nominators. These behavioral data contradict the expressed racial value orientations of most faculty at all four schools, namely that they prefer to be essentially "color-blind" (Slaughter, Schneider, Lee, & Lindsey, 1984).

Academic equity between black and nonblack children.

What the schools do achieve is a measure of academic equity. Admitted students appear to continue to learn at a pace consistent with their family backgrounds and their developmental status at entry. Importantly, there are no significant racial differences between black and nonblack students at any school in mathematics performance (computation), and actual performance levels for both groups at all schools are at or above grade level. Two findings, however, point to the continuing influence of socioeconomic status differences, even within middle income families.

First, black students have significantly lower reading comprehension scores in comparison with nonblack students. Nonetheless, the reading scores of black students in three of the four schools (Oak Lawn, Monroe, Roman) are, on average, at or above grade level. Second, the school serving children from families with significantly lower annual incomes (St August) also had the lowest average reading achievement scores. Interviews with faculty reveal St August school has many immigrant children of non-English-speaking parents.

The relationship between income rank and reading achievement rank was also examined. Among blacks, the correlation between average reported family income within each school and reading achievement rank is perfect, r= 1.00. The higher the annual black family income rank across the four schools, the higher the average reading achievement rank. The finding does not hold for nonblack parents whose reported

yearly family income, in many instances, is less likely to reflect their capital assets.

These data suggest that socioeconomic class is routinely implicated in some evaluations of academic achievement in the primary and elementary school years, even when minimal performance standards are clearly met. In American society, educational equity between races and ethnic groups in some curriculum areas may well be unattainable; what is clearly attainable is that the children of all racial and ethnic groups, on the average, can achieve grade-level expectations. This study indicates that such achievement is possible within diverse school cultures.

Grade level standards are less likely to be attained in schools whose "cultures" are, for any of a variety of reasons, less coherent and mutually supported by children, families, and school faculty (Ogbu, 1974; Comer, 1980; Sarason, 1971, 1983). Elementary school cultures without such characteristics, it is hypothesized, cannot create students who will identify themselves as successful school achievers. Once the basis for such an identity formation is established, most children will work persistently to reinforce and affirm their own images of themselves.

Mesosystemic issues: Perceptions of parents, administrators and faculty; Parental participation in school life.

Parental perspectives on private schooling.

Nearly all the black parents reported that they were

prepared to make considerable financial and personal sacrifices for the children's attendance at these private schools. In fact, they do make these sacrifices, and in many instances their children are aware of their actions. For example, black children in these schools are no more likely to receive scholarship aid than other children even though, as noted earlier, the average annual family income of the black parents is significantly lower than that of nonblack parents. No school has scholarship funds especially designated for blacks.

However, black parents also reported that they were not opposed to public education and, in fact, were reasonably satisfied with the public education they received as children. Private schooling had come to symbolize for the black parents the best available option for their own children. The parents equated educational quality with private schooling as a pragmatic reality, not a logical necessity. Since black, in comparison with nonblack, parents were more likely to be employed in education-related industries, and since this factor alone may have affected the families' available income, their perceptions are very important. Their choice of private schooling appears to be less of a rejection of public schooling, and more of an evolution of a new strategy for insuring future levels of sustained and/or upward mobility for the family. In short, if there are any special occupational or career opportunities for black Americans in the future, these parents intend for their children to have the necessary

educational training, networking contacts, and social skills to profit by them. Such ambitions for the children are hardly surprising when it is considered that this generation of parents, as the immediately post-civil rights movement generation, found itself exposed to entirely unpredicted opportunities and options by comparison to other generations of black Americans (Franklin, 1978).

Although many nonblack parents share similar views, the interview data suggest that for them private schooling per se is more likely to be perceived either as part of a family life style passed from one generation to another, or as an opportunity for their children to attend a respected, socially prestigious school, or as a vehicle for pleasant social participation with like-minded persons and families with similar-aged children, or even as an opportunity to create the kind of total educational experience they believe best for their children.

Faculty perceptions of black children and families.

During the study top administrators, faculty in administrative positions, and other faculty and parent leaders were interviewed. School administrators and faculty also held positions about racial equity. These positions influenced how they perceived both the black community and the black children and families in their schools. Specific questions were asked about the role of the home environment in the child's academic life. Remarkable agreements were obtained between black parents and the school administrators and faculty at the four

schools on the role of the home environment and the child's academic performance. Although each school has its own unique expectations for parental involvement, the role of the home environment begins to be articulated at the admissions process. Once a child is admitted, individual teachers at all schools are free to contact students' families as they choose. These contacts often serve to reinforce both parental and school expectations.

Administrators and faculty at the four schools described their families differently. Oak Lawn emphasized that black and other families have more commonalities than differences because they share a middle to upper-middle class professional or business-oriented life style. Stressing commonalities is viewed as an important means of unifying the ethnically and racially diverse school community. Roman families were portrayed as wealthy, generally of a higher social standing than teachers, and highly skeptical of the school's role in any but the educational aspects of their children's lives. However, many families welcome advice and counsel about parenting and childrearing. The top administrator perceived black families as more conservative and traditional. From the headmaster's perspective, the black students lend a stabilizing influence to the school.

St August families are viewed as hard-working, many parents of whom are foreign-born, and who highly value education. School faculty believe families often need special attention and nurturing because of social problems in

the community, and sometimes, at home. St August cherishes the ethnic and racial diversity of its families. It develops programs and activities with the children to affirm their knowledge and understanding of their families' cultural differences. Black families are perceived as more socially integrated into the American way of life, and therefore, more involved with their children's education than other nonblack families.

Monroe families are perceived as highly committed to racial integration and social diversity in the school. This intellectual and social commitment is based upon how families perceived American society ought to be, specifically, what is good for all children, whether white or black. Black families are perceived to be less secure in their middle class status, more vested in tangible signs of educational progress, and less focused on the educational process, than other families.

Administrators and faculty at all schools emphasized the exceedingly high, and rising, expectations of families for children's academic achievements. In other data obtained from parents regarding their educational aspirations, expectations, and minimal standards for educational attainment, these views were corroborated. Oak Lawn and Monroe pointed to the high ambitions of black parents, ambitions sometimes leading to unrealistic expectations for grade level placement and for classroom work by fathers and mothers (Oak Lawn), or an overemphasis on skill acquisition (Monroe).

Administrators and faculty at all schools also stressed the importance of the home environment to the child's education. Oak Lawn expects the family's role to be largely supportive. The home should be a place where children can regularly study when they must, and a source of enrichment and relaxation relative to educationally-related extracurricular and social activities. Roman expects the home's role to be both supportive and facilitative. Only a well-rounded, emotionally-stable child is an effective academic competitor. The rigor of academic pressures at school can be disasterous for children experiencing highly unstable, nonsupportive home situations. St August expects the family to convey to the child a high value for education and learning. Children may even teach parents about what they have learned in school; the school expects parents to be supportive, and to respect the child's efforts at teaching and learning. Monroe expects the home to be supportive of children's natural curiosities and motivations for learning. Children need to become disciplined through learning how to make wise choices about matters important to them; parents help by being patient, not imposing their values, and providing children opportunities to make real choices in their lives at home. All schools expect parents to provide homework time, to help with homework on occasion, and to monitor the influence of television. All schools expect parental involvement in designated school activities. No differential expectations were reported for

black or nonblack families. However, all schools report that black children require some special considerations from their families.

Black families have the primary, if not sole, responsibility for teaching their children racial pride, and informing them about their heritage and background in American culture. St August and Monroe, in particular, perceive themselves as providing supplementary support in these efforts, but administrators and faculty at all schools typically place the primary responsibility with family. In fact, all schools emphasize the importance of being "color-blind" with regard to daily interactions with black and other children.

The black community at large is perceived somewhat negatively from the perspective of the majority of schools. Oak Lawn emphasized that its black students could have problems with the black community as a result of being "outsiders" in their own neighborhoods. Other youth may envy them for having the opportunity to attend Oak Lawn, given its excellent reputation in the Chicago community. Another problem which limits neighborhood friendships, and which is shared with nonblack students, is the high average distance between home and school. At Oak Lawn, the distance can be considerable, and therefore, travel time restricts time for making and sustaining friendships. Conversely, distance also increases the likelihood that the social life of the families will be independent of the school community, thus impinging

upon the latter's closeness and unity. Some faculty expressed concern that black children acquire undesirable behavioral traits from out-of-school contacts with peers. Oak Lawn stressed a preference for having no dual standards, for having the same academic and social expectations for black and other students.

Roman stressed that within the school black children's problems were often social, rather than academic, given that the school services children from predominately white (WASP) upper-middle class families. The administrator also expressed a concern that graduating black youth do not take effective advantage of the school's academic reputation when considering college; frequently, they "aim low" in their college choices. Both Roman and Oak Lawn perceive themselves as elite, college preparatory institutions, and therefore, they are highly protective of students' college aspirations and attainments. The concerns at Roman, however, also suggest that generally the black community is perceived as socially (though not morally) inferior to the communities of other school families. However, in classrooms children are taught without regard to social background. Roman administrators explictly emphasized that once admitted, black students are held to the same academic expectations and standards as other students. Furthermore, administrators and faculty at Roman acknowledge the presence of children from several socially prominent black families.

St August and Monroe schools perceive the black community somewhat differently. St August emphasized the potential strengths children can develop from learning how to effectively cope with a diverse urban community. Children who learn to cope successfully with the rigors of urban life, acquire a solid educational foundation, and develop racial (or ethnic) pride about themselves and their heritage as a result of the cooperative efforts of home and school, "can't lose" in the future. Monroe reaffirmed its high valuation of socioeconomic diversity in the school, a diversity not always attainable given limitations on scholarship aid. Some faculty and parent leaders felt black children at Monroe could profit from greater exposure to and awareness of, the life experiences of other blacks and nonblacks less privileged than themselves. A faculty member expressed the view that it was important for nonblack children to see and experience blacks in authoritative roles. Faculty at all schools stressed that their black children would, and do, achieve in life, particularly if they do not become unduly defensive about being black in America.

In summary, school administrators and faculty at best regard the black community ambivalently, possibly partly because they are highly protective of all their children and families and do not wish to see any harmed by non-school liaisons; partly because families' strong allegiences to other than the school community at this time could threaten the educational process; and partly because this is the message

they receive from black parents of enrolled children who decidedly want something "better" for their children than is currently available in their neighborhoods and community.

Parental participation in the schools

Each school structures parental participation differently. Common features include parental clubs, and involvement at the level of the Board of Trustees or Advisory Councils. Parent-teacher conferences about the academic progress of students are routively scheduled throughout the academic year. Monroe perceives itself as parent-owned and operated. Roman has many structural arrangements for involving parents, and includes among them parent meetings with administrators focused on the needs of its developing students. At Roman, one series of meetings focused on increasing the numbers of minority students in the school. Unlike Monroe and Roman, Oak Lawn restricts parental classroom observations (due to the small, intimate spacing of rooms), but encourages parents to participate in annually scheduled events, as well as to give volunteer time to campus facilities. It stresses links to the surrounding neighborhood through a co-sponsored community arts center. St August emphasizes building up parental involvement, knowing all parents on a first-name basis as early in the year as possible. Many contacts with parents are sustained by phone, but teachers also visit homes.

In other analyses (Schneider & Slaughter, 1985) school and racial differences in parental invovlement were obtained.

School differences are consistent with the educational philosophies, parent communities, and social organization of each school. Parents at Monroe and Roman, respectively, demonstrate the highest average level of awareness of opportunities to participate, as well as actual participation, in school activities, while Oak Lawn and St August demonstrate lower levels. However, as far as sense of belonging to the school community, the schools rank Monroe first, followed by St August, Oak Lawn, and Roman. Black parents, in comparison with nonblacks, were significantly less likely to be intensely active in the school communities, and more likely to recommend changes to enhance the school's sense of community. The types of changes black parents suggested to interviewers included more parent involvement in school activities, more minority student recruitment, and more ways to improve race relations among parents.

Certain aspects of parental involvement in schools seem particularly salient to black children's peer status in the schools (Slaughter, Schneider, Gold, & Johnson, 1985). Among black children, parents' awareness, and presumably use, of multiple sources of feedback about their children's academic progress is a good indicator of their child's popularity among same-race and cross-race peers.

These findings indicate that, for a variety of reasons, black parents are sensitive to perceptions held about them by administrators and faculty, but particularly, by nonblack parents. They understand the relative "newness" of the

private schooling experience for their families and children. Possibly, some reject elitist distinctions drawn between their families and the black community as a whole. Many more simply prefer that their communities not be the basis of subtle, invidious discriminations practiced among parents within the schools. These distinctions, it should be added, are ones over which administrators and faculty have considerably less direct control. Black parents appear to hope, at least at some schools, for more effective black parental involvement and increased numbers of black students and families to offset feelings of detachment and marginality. Parental involvement in American schools is not an unmixed blessing for black families in desegregated schools where they may occupy both a lower socioeconomic status and the status of being the most visible newcomers to a school's community, especially if these are combined with a school's lack of explicit commitment to racial integration.

At Monroe, high complementary educational goals help to overcome barriers to relationships between black and nonblack families (Slaughter & Schneider, 1985). At St August, the nurturant, humanistic stance of administration and faculty toward all parents, irrespective of race, ethnicity, or religious affiliation, is helpful. At Oak Lawn, respect for the authority and wisdom of administrators and faculty in educational decision-making helps to overcome black-nonblack racial barriers between families. And at Roman, progressive, open acknowledgement of its struggles in this area continually

serve to rekindle trust and commitment to a school undergoing slow, but definite, positive changes in racial attitudes and relations.

In summary, macrosystemic issues indigenous to American culture influenced observed mesosystemic relations, in particular relations between black parents and others in the private schools in this study. Given these observations and interpretations of mesosystemic relations between the black families and these private schools, it is appropriate to consider how each school, at the microsystemic level, effectively supports the identity of a "successful school achiever," in its black students.

Microsystemic issues: The black students, their teachers and peers.

This research report could not describe the tremendous variety of individual experiences of black children in the four study schools. Of necessity, it focused on some central themes and issues affecting all black children. It is possible to make a few observations generally, and about each school in particular. More detailed accounts will be offered in future reports and writings.

In three of the four schools, the black children were not exposed to black history and culture, nor were the other students who could also benefit from knowledge and understanding of this extremely rich aspect of American history and culture. These schools may not be positively contributing to black children's identity development as black persons in America, nor to other children's understanding of the cultural pluralistic foundations of this society. Middle income black parents motivated by an intense desire that their children access the best available academic

education, chose these schools because of the strong emphasis on educational achievement, and typically gave the four schools responsibility for defining what "best" shall be. Therefore, the daily experiences of the children were largely governed by the schools' educational philosophies, insofar as these influenced teachers and the organization and management of classrooms.

The concerns of the schools, and of individual faculty, dominated what children learned of both race and class in America. Regarding race, in three of the schools, the philosophies were individually- focused and did not usually take other than a "color-blind" perspective on race in America. Some faculty were concerned that children understand that being more priviledged, relative to American children as a whole ( and even black children generally), carried a unique social responsibility. Some were also concerned that children understand that being poor need not be associated with a host of "socially undesirable" traits. Many more faculty were concerned that the children in their schools, black or otherwise, have the benefits of solid, standard positive educational practices.

Generally, the black children behaved as if they liked their schools, possibly because they could actively participate in school and classroom life, because they experienced clear, consistent expectations for high personal educational achievement, because they knew their parents were concerned for their educational success, and because they did not, at this time in their lives, know that "school" could be any different from how they experienced it. Therefore, though schoolwork was acknowledged by them as

difficult and demanding, and though many were not always as well-recognized as they might have been for individual accomplishments, the absence of overt race-related harassment, friendship ties, with selected peers, and genuine loyalty and fondness for their teachers, attenuated the academic and social pressures. The black children adapted, as did other children, to the educational environments created for them by the schools they attended with the active cooperation of their parents.

Oak Lawn Black Students and School Life

At Oak Lawn black students, like all students, are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. Learning and instruction are teacher-centered and students are socialized to believe that their mastery of subject matter determines their performance on tests and quizzes, and therefore, the grades they receive from teachers. In the middle school, academic matters are approached in a serious, no-nonsense manner by faculty; little observed classroom time extends to non-academic matters, and student discipline is rarely a problem. Oak Lawn reflects a traditional approach to education when implemented at its best. Students in higher academic grade tracks typically receive more "A" grades, partly because they demonstrate greater proficiency on evaluative measures. Collectively, black students are more often placed in lower tracks. These students are usually exposed to the same curriculum as students in higher tracks, but teachers appear to expect a more demanding teaching effort with such students.

Social recognition in school life is closely linked to acknowledged successful student performance. This places some black

students at a disadvantage relative to active participation in the breath of school life and extracurricular experiences with which they could become involved that are peer-dominated (e.g., Student Council). The school's relative inattention to black history and culture may further reinforce the view in all students' minds that blacks are not appropriate persons to be selected for important leadership roles and responsibilities. In addition, at the time of the observations, there were no black teachers in the middle school, and only one in the total school.

However, as a school Oak Lawn has actively pursued a policy of desegregation ( nearly 30 percent of its student body is black), and Oak Lawn is extremely proud, as it should be, of the cultural diversity of its entire student body. Oak Lawn encourages students from these diverse backgrounds to discover what they share in common, as persons and as students, and to use these commonalities as a basis for building relationships. Some of its educational practices (e.g., assigned lunchroom seating) facilitate inter-cultural contacts between students. Probably, if the students did not have families, and generally live in homogeneous neighborhoods and communities, this strategy for building inter-group relations would be even be more successful. Oak Lawn is distinguished by its unique vision of the relationship between education and social and cultural pluralism in America, as well as by the excellence of the academic education delivered to all of its students.

Roman Black Students and School Life

Roman develops the identity of successful school achievers

primarily through its commitment to academic excellence. Black and nonblack students learn that the most valued activity at Roman school is academic achievement. To become a member of the Roman school culture, one has to work very hard at academic pursuits. Teachers organized and manage their classrooms so that black and nonblack students can meet the school's high academic expectations. Lessons are intellectually demanding, directions are clear, praise is frequent although not effusive, and class discussions and activities correspond to the curriculum content.

Under demanding academic conditions both black and nonblack students achieve. Although the number of black students at Roman is very small, it was clear, that some of them were at the very top of their classes academically, and were socially accepted by their peer groups. There were a few students in the middle of the class and few black students with learning problems.

School life for black children clearly reflected Roman's philosophy of making no distinctions among students with respect to ethnic or racial differences. Black and nonblack students are given equal opportunities to participate in school activites. Teachers are as likely to select black as nonblack students for various school functions. Thus black students participate and are as likely to feel involved as nonblack students in Roman school.

What all black students do not receive at Roman school is a positive racial identity. The school deliberately avoids drawing attention to any racial or ethnic group. Although the philosophy of Roman is to minimize racial differences, the school recognizes the importance of having a diverse student body and is seeking ways to

increase the number of minority students in the school. This may be problematic because the school tends to make some black students feel uncomfortable with their black identity. This point was expressed by a parent at a school meeting, " I am afraid my child is losing his sense of black identity." One way to increase the number of black students in the school would be to provide a positive social experience for the black children in the school which then could be communicated to other potential black applicants.

St. August Black Students and School Life

Being a student at St. August means being a member of a caring multi ethnic and multi racial community. The school takes advantage of every religious holiday, special event, or classroom lesson to make the students feel that they are part of a culturally diverse closely knit group. Nonblack students are frequently exposed to black cultural experiences. As one teacher remarked, "You don't have to be black to learn about black culture." Thus, it is not unexpected that cross racial friendships were frequently observed.

A cultural identity is sometimes stressed over a religious identity, primarily because so many of the students are non Catholic. Social responsibility to one's classmates, to one's community and to the world, is the living doctrine of the classroom. Humanistic values, such as concern over social injustice, religious tolerance, and world wide peace are emphasized rather than religious ideologies and rituals.

In addition to these social values, the school emphasizes the acquisition of basic skills. Teachers work diligently at keeping

all students at grade level or above, often staying after school until 5 o' clock providing extra help to students with academic problems. In-class and homework assignments are comprehensive and carefully monitored. Students receive frequent and positive feedback on their academic performance. Black students are proportionately overrepresented in the high and middle reading and mathematics groups. Although St. August has limited resources it has managed to have the majority of its students performing at grade level on standardized tests for reading and mathematics. The school may be able to improve these results by structuring more class learning activities around abstract concepts.

Black and nonblack students at St. August learn something in school that none of the students in the other schools learn, that is racial pride and cultural awareness. In American classrooms too often, black history and culture has received little or no attention. At St. August, black and nonblack children learn to appreciate the cultural heritage of black Americans. St. August is perhaps the most forward of the schools with respect to social relations, for it is preparing its students to be citizens of a multi ethnic and multi racial world.

Monroe Black Students and School Life

Monroe middle school aged black students tend to be in the majority of ( 75-80 percent) in the school. Further, the nonblack minority population is white. However, relations between both groups of children are much more decisively determined by the unique, nontraditional features of this school's educational philosophy and organization. Monroe's history as a parent-originated, parent-governed, alternative school within a "liberal white" dominated Chicago community, and its current independent

status as an experiment in child-centered open education, are the most decisive factors in how black children participate in school life at Monroe.

Monroe faculty expect children to be children, that is developing persons gradually learning to organize their behaviors in more adult-like goal-directed forms. Learning to organize one's behavior, to regulate the expression of feelings, and to use those feelings and sentiments toward academically productive individual and collective goals are all extremely important to education at Monroe. Therefore, in Monroe classrooms, typically middle school students receive assigned work at the beginning of the week, and may pursue these assignments in the course of the week at their own pace. These individual pursuits are interspersed with small group instructional activities focused on skill-building projects (e.g., math groups, computer groups). In this type of structured learning environment, there is considerable time for peer social interaction during regular "academic" classes, and there are also opportunities for children to spend time "off-task." Conversational topics covered by students with each other and their teachers while working on weekly assignments, are wide-ranging. Further, faculty actively involve students in planning for all activities inside and outside the classroom, again because of perceptions that this is an essential aspect of their "education."

Social recognition at Monroe depends upon the child's overall level of social competence. Children who can better organize their behavior toward academic study time, and who successfully negotiate and interact with significant numbers of their peers, adapt well at Monroe, and this includes black and nonblack children. However, although Monroe children are unusually free to "be themselves,"

constraints on their behaviors are introduced through teacher-facilitated formal and informal peer sanctions, by the perceived delegated "parent-like" authority held by their teachers, by the children's own awareness of the schoolwork to be accomplished, and by the close, continual, open communication between parents and teachers.

Because children are free to be childlike, whatever form that may take in their own families, neighborhoods, and communities, in many ways Monroe is an ideally racially integrated school. However, some of these relatively protected urban children could later experience some identity confusion when exposed to broader societal norms about race and class in America. Monroe children are especially in need of educational experiences which teach them how children like them whose schools are different from their own, experience life. While some of us wait for the "real world" to catch up to the socialization experiences modelled at Monroe, Monroe children deserve to be apprised of what that "other world" is about.

Research and Policy Implications

Four paths to academic excellence have been described, each one of which middle income black children and families have been found to utilize adaptively. The implications of study findings for both educational policy and programs, as well as future research are discussed from the viewpoint of private school communities, black American families with school-aged children, and students of family school relations.

Implications for the private school communities

Life in private schools for school personnel, parents and students has traditionally been a relatively unexplored research area. Few studies have systematically examined life in private schools, even fewer have focused on studying the relationships among school learning and socialization activities and family and community goals. Results of this study have revealed significant new information on family school choice alternatives, organization and structure of private elementary schools, student participation in school life, parent involvement in school activities, and professional responsibilities and obligations of private school personnel.

1. One of the most controversial issues being debated in the public arena has been whether to provide direct or indirect aid to families choosing private schools for their children in the form of tuition tax credits or education vouchers. Although the black community has not initiated or sponsored legislative proposals regarding family choice, they have strong diverse opinions on the educational benefits of such

policies for black children both rich and poor. A commonly held assumption is that the black community is unified in its' support for public education for black children. Results of this study indicate that differences in opinion among the black community regarding the use of public funds for educational vouchers or tuition tax credits center on whether the education that the majority of black children receive today would likely worsen if aid to private schools would increase. Black parents in this study were not opposed to the idea of public education, and in the past, public education was generally viewed as the only option for blacks to gain equal educational and financial opportunities in American society. Growing support for private education among the black community seriously challenges the monopolistic function of public schools to accomplish these ends. Private schools are emerging as a significant competitor to public education for black students. This trend is likely to continue to increase, particularly if the public schools do not provide opportunities for social mobility for black children.

2. The ethnic and racial composition of the student body in private schools has been changing considerably over the past fifteen years. For example, in Chicago area Catholic schools, black students represented 17 percent of the total population of elementary students in 1970. Within a ten year period, the percentage of black students in the school population increased to 30 percent (Catholic schools Office, 1982). Obtaining information on changes in the student composition of

private schools is very problematic. To learn about changes in the composition of the student body in Chicago area private schools, a mail and telephone survey had to be conducted as part of this study. The difficulties encountered in obtaining this information, highlight an overriding problem in conducting research on private elementary schools. National and state data bases collect very limited information on private schools. For example, the Illinois State Board of Education does not tabulate minority enrollments in private schools. Associations such as the National Association for Independent Schools, to which elite schools belong or the Alternative Schools Network, to which alternative schools belong, also do not release information on minority enrollments. Moreover, the National Center on Educational Statistics does not tabulate minority enrollments by school type. Serious efforts need to be undertaken to obtain a clearer picture of some basic organizational information on private schools.

3. Prior to this study, there were several testimonial accounts about the value and benefits of attending a small school. "Smallness" has been one of private schools unique and attractive features (with the exception of some Catholic schools). The average private school has an enrollment under 300 and in some affiliations a good deal less than that. The schools in this study would be considered "small". Roman's elementary total student body is slightly higher than this figure. However, all of the four schools maintain an average

student teacher ratio of 17 to one. Results of the in-school observations indicate that all students in these schools, both black and nonblack, are given ample opportunities to participate in schools activities and there is frequent communication among students and teachers. Although student participation takes a somewhat different form in each school, it appears that active participation and involvement help to develop the identity of a successful school achiever. Black students in these schools are seen as equal citizens having the same responsibilities, and accountable for the same levels of academic and social performance. Expectations for equal participation among black students in school life in these private schools is the norm. These results are quite different from some other studies (e.g., Rist, 1978) where blacks in desegregated school environments have marginal status, and are not expected nor encouraged to fully participate in school life.

4. Educational research has shown that one way to improve the quality of education is to encourage parent contact and involvement in schools. Results of this study reveal that educational quality is associated with parent participation. However, the form that effective parent participation takes varies across school settings. It is the socio-organizational structure of the schools that affects how parents participate in school life. Effective parent involvement is more closely linked to school and family goal expectations than direct participation. Parent participation in the four schools is

influenced by the parents' view of the purpose of schooling and reinforced by the school culture. Merely adding a parent advisory committee is unlikely to increase school effectiveness. Rather it is the building of a sense of commitment to certain educational goals among the school personnel, the students and their families that is one of the keys to school success.

5. At these schools, teachers are viewed by the administration, parents, and students as professionals. This acknowledged "professionalism" is earned through the efforts of the teachers, who are deeply committed to their work, spend hours beyond their classroom time preparing lessons designed to help students meet school standards, monitor student progress, participate in various activities to improve their performance as teachers, and support school fund raising endeavors. In all of the schools, the teachers praise, reprimand, and demand the same level of performance for all their students both black and nonblack. Some of the teachers are concerned about the social development of their black students and incorporate activities to enhance racial pride in their lessons. However, this is not indicative of the majority of the teachers. Teachers tend to behave more in conjunction with the expectations of the parents and school than out of their own convictions or ideals. The value the schools place on their staff, is evidenced by the intensive teacher selection process undertaken by all four schools. In the future, selection of more black and other minority faculty

could be beneficial for all children, who need opportunities to learn from persons from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Teachers could also benefit from these relationships. However, teacher "professionalism" is not intrinsic to the teachers themselves, but is dependent on how the school and its' community view and support the role of the teacher in the educative process.

Implications for black families

The findings of this study have particular implications for black families with school-aged children. In recent years, many more black American families have enjoyed middle to upper-middle class life styles. Little research has examined the implications of these newer life styles, particularly the desegregated life styles, for the education and development of the children in these families. Even fewer studies consider what the consequences of this emergent class are for black communities as a whole. It is generally assumed that they are uniformly good (e.g., Scanzoni, 1977, 1985). Parents themselves have few guidelines for school selection. As to educational quality, they are much clearer about what they do not want than what they do want. At present, it seems parents frame their educational goals intuitively, using their personal life histories, the impact of media-driven assessments of public education today, and the pressures of their current life styles as guides. Parents are less likely to consider alternative educational philosophies, or the long-range implications of differing educational settings for

their children's personal-social development. Schools are not often perceived more broadly as socialization settings. Finally, parents are even less likely to consider the implications of the decisions they make for the black communities in which they and their children also participate.

1. There has been considerable recent debate over the merits of desegregated schooling. Results of this study indicate that desegregated private schooling is a viable educational option for black families prepared to cope with the culture of such a highly intimate, informal setting. Although instances of misunderstandings and some maltreatment were observed, generally the black children in these private schools are receiving an excellent academic education, and this is reflected in their achievement scores and personal self-percepts. Parents of attending children consistently emphasize the importance of being knowledgeable about school life, and of participating as frequently as possible, given the constraints of each school's social organization.

2. Second, results of this study also indicate there is no singularly perfect school for all black children and families. If initial mutuality of educational aims is very important, parents must be prepared to devote time to a systematic search for a school appropriate to their identified educational goals. Given a commitment to educational excellence, black children can achieve in highly diverse educational settings. With private schools, parents can use the admissions process to assess whether the school is right for their family, while

the school assesses whether their child is right for it. This type of parental appraisal presumes that parents know their educational philosophy, their child's particular strengths and weaknesses, and the broader implications of the family's life style for the kind of parental involvement it will be able to sustain within a given school community.

3. Third, results of the study indicate that peer relations and curriculum are particular points of interest for families. Between the four study schools there was considerable variety in the quality of children's peer relations. Racial interactive preferences were as important to these relations as child sex and level of social maturity. Children in schools with lower percentages of blacks had fewer chances of nominations by peers as persons to study with, be with, or be influenced by. The optimal percentages of black enrollments in such desegregated environments appear to be between 12-50%. (The lower figure represents the percentage of blacks in the national population.) It is also reasonable to expect the schools to have employed minority faculty available to the child's grade level. Both black and nonblack parents want their children to learn interracial tolerance; children's observations of role models in the form of faculty relationships would be very important in this regard.

Further, in the schools studied, more socially progressive than many such schools, there was virtually no attention to the social responsibilities of these children as members of middle income black families. The sending black

parents wanted not only the academic basics, for their children, but also they be prepared to access the "best" educational institutions that this society can offer. They did not, in equivalent voice, demand that the children learn to be socially responsible. Further, there were few school-related curriculum activities which could serve to inculcate such values.

4. Fourth, at this time we can only speculate about the long-range implications of the children's experiences for themselves, and for the black community. What black parents and children are doing should not be construed as our belief of what they ought to do or not do. The current educational trend which many of the more privileged black families of the black community are pursuing may or may not be beneficial to individual children. The authors are more confident that the trend is further dividing the black community into the "haves" and "have nots." Those who "have" could become increasingly less knowledgeable about, and therefore feel less socially responsible for, the "have nots."

Reversal of this trend requires that black parents first develop alternative, supplemental educational experiences to sensitize their children, and second, become more active in the schools to build networks with other parents so as to encourage the schools to do more than the minimal currently being done. In this study, community-wide social prestige or reputational standing of the school seemed inversely correlated with an emphasis on social responsbility for others

who are less fortunate. It is indeed ironic that those children potentially able to do the most, may be being inadvertantly socialized to care the least.

Each of these policy implications, as addressed to black American families, underscores the idea that they must begin to perceive schools as more than educational vehicles for social mobility and opportunity. Rather, they must perceive schools as socialization settings, particularly characterized by the processes of teaching and learning (Sarason, 1983).

Implications for students of family school relations.

Several observations are noteworthy, given the original hypotheses of this study (see chapter 4, p. 76). Based on existing literature it was predicted that: (1) Black families choose private schools in accordance with their own educational goals for their children; (2) Diversity of private school types would be significantly associated with diversity in black student outcomes; and (3) Private schools, as ecological settings, contribute significantly (i.e., beyond family background characteristics) to black students' educational outcomes, including achievement performance and self esteem.

1. First, it was found that parents do not necessarily consciously choose private schools in accordance with specific educational aims that extend substantially beyond a desire for social mobility and opportunity. However, intuitive parental educational philosophies do exist and are identifiable when parents are probed. The most important factor distinguishing

parental educational goals (see chapter 8) was whether the parents percevied the family (Authoritative, Humanistic response patterns) or the school (Deliberate, Traditional, Moral, Practical response patterns) as primarily responsible for the child's education. It seems more useful, given that each school had parents with a variety of educational goals, to conceptualize families and schools as continually engaged in a bi-directional socialization process relative to educational aims or objectives. In private schools, this process begins with admissions procedures.

2. Second, the differing schools did not have, on the traditional, product-oriented measures of achievment, self-concept, and peer status used in this study, substantially different child behavioral outcomes (see chapter 10). Essentially, it was found that coherent, consistent school cultures can support successful black students who meet academic grade level and personal-social expectations even if, when schools are described (see chapter 9), their cultures are found to be very different.

3. Third, average differences between children by school on measures of reading achievement do seem related to school differences in families' socioeconomic backgrounds, rather than to the school cultures in which they participate. Among blacks in particular, average family income rank and average reading achievment level vary directly and perfectly by school. These findings are important because this group of families, given their educaitonal levels, occupations, and

incomes, would be identified by American standards as minimally middle class (see chapter 7). In American society, even within the middle classes the specifics of socioeconomic status emerge as important correlates of some forms of academic achievement. Given study findings, this emergence appears to be contingent upon both academic subject matter and the kinds of images children and families create for themselves, in view of societal stereotyping, within the school's social system. Importantly, within the middle classes, including the black middle classes, there is at present simply too much diversity in familial life styles to predict in advance the families' educational priorities and to unilaterally assume educational benefits to this social status.

Although an ethnographic study like this cannot offer conclusive evidence that schools, whether private or public, contribute beyond family background to student achievement, it has been argued (see chapters 11, 12) that there is a very high probability that children unable to identify with the valued priorities and assumptions of their particular school are unlikely to be judged successful in it. They pose discipline problems that eventually lead to expulsion or withdrawal, whether or not they have high academic ability. The data suggest the hypothesis that school cultures without high academic standards that are clearly supported by their organizational and managerial characteristics contribute to students' perceptions of themselves as academic failures.

Further, there is every indication that the personal-social development of children will vary between schools. Children and families in the differing school cultures were observed to talk about the educational process and life in schools differently, and to be encouraged by school faculty to establish different personal priorities. Because each school had its own unique culture and "personality," it seems reasonable to expect that participating children are being encouraged to develop particular personal strengths. As one example, interracial and cross-class (socioeconomic) peer relations within the schools could impact these middle school children's identity development. Longtitudinal research relative to the formation of these children's adolescent identities is definitely indicated.

Conclusion

This ethnographic study has revealed the complexities involved in educating black children even under optimal circumstances in American society today. Among families and schools in this study, generally there is no inherent conflict of interest between the children's family background or home environment and the desegregated private schools they attend. Parents desire, and schools want to give, the best in education that the society can offer. Black parents generally support the schools, and the schools expend considerable effort to treat the black children as they would any other American children.

Nonetheless, because of the historic educational patterns characteristic of the larger black community, black families are newcomers to these types of urban private schools. As families, they bring their own special interests and needs. Further, the life styles of middle class black families are, as are the life styles of all American families, undergoing rapid social change. For black families in particular, there is continual reappraisal of the merits of desegregated education for their children. On the one hand, they wish to prepare children for future social mobility and opportunity. Many are keenly aware of the extent of their own preparedness for entry into the life styles and statuses they currently occupy. On the other hand, they observe a society which may be undergoing a relaxation of commitment to equal opportunity for all citizens, regardless of racial or social backgorund, and they wish their children to competently negotiate a racially-stratified society. Those aware of this latter problem, side with schools in the belief that the home environment is primarily responsible for inculating racial pride and sense of responsibility in developing black children. However, both the black parents and the schools seem less aware of the other competing ideologies and norms frequently offered in the subtle socialization processes inherent to the educational environments of such schools.

Further, the private schools in this study have their own dilemmas and contradictions when it comes to black children and families. They understand that, in being desegregated,

they are in the vanguard of most other comparable private schools. In these times, they are less likely than ever to be rewarded by constituent nonblack parent communities, or recognized by the society at large for what they have accomplished, and would like to accomplish, in the arena of education and race relations. Vulnerable to criticisms from both racial constituencies for highly differing reasons, the schools are almost stoic, and surely heroic, in their resolve to create and sustain educational environments which envision a future in which the spirit of the American dream will at last become a reality.

As researchers, we felt privileged and humbled by observations of these families and schools as they struggled to make meaning of the many contradictions in American society today so as to assure their children's educational futures.